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Addresses delivered
BY
PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON
AND
GEO. A. POST
BEFORE THE
RAILWAY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

National organization of manufacturing, mercantile and engineering concerns which deal with steam railways on the occasion of its Seventh Annual Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, Jan. 27, 1916

New York, January 27, 1916

in Exchange
Bu. of Railway Economics

A d d r e s s b y Geo. A. Post

President of the Association

THREE is a word that has, during the past year and a half, come into conspicuous, constant and serious use throughout our country, the utterance of which immediately causes a copious flow of other words to be used with reference thereto—some hot, some cool, some wise and some otherwise. That word is: PREPAREDNESS. In all our country wide, there probably could not be assembled an audience, the personnel of which would have a more comprehensive understanding of its significance, than does this vast throng. It is the business of most of those here gathered to be ready for any and every emergency.

The industries that support, and that are represented by, the Railway Business Association are, of necessity, always looking to the future, planning to meet its demands. We know that the implement or method adequate or suitable for to-day will become inadequate and unsuitable for the exactions and situations of to-morrow. To the rear sags the man content with the achievements of yesterday; to the fore strides he who with prophetic vision penetrates the veil which hides the future from those who will not or can not look ahead

and bestir themselves. By serious study, sober reasoning, costly experiment, courageous investment, and effective organization, the emergent hour is faced with confidence, unexpected complications are coped with, safety is assured and success is secured. We are not unacquainted with the coward who would venture nothing, the penurious who would spend nothing, the indolent who would do nothing, the critic who carps at everything that does not originate with him, and the visionary who bawls loudly for the instant approval of anything that he thinks he thinks. We know better than to run away from trouble, for as we flee it will surely overtake us, being unopposed. By facing it manfully, we can at least palliate it, perhaps, or by the might of right overwhelm it.

We are prepared for the shocks of commercial contest, proud of the fact that we are important factors in the upbuilding of the greatness of our country. We do not prate as much about our patriotism as do some who are not as busy doing real things as we, but we are patriotic all the same. We are considerably interested in this land of the free and home of the brave. We love it. Du-

ties falling to us to perform in its defence, will be performed with all our brains, equipment, resources, and hearts. With alacrity will we participate in councils for the maturing and effectuation of plans conceived for the industrial preparedness of our nation.

In our associated capacity, we have, during the past seven years, taken cognizance of the necessity for preparedness on the part of our railways. Their preparedness for the tonnage of peace is vital to the welfare of every citizen of the country. It is for that we have labored, persistently, earnestly, and with civil tongue. If their preparedness as an arm of national defence now looms large as of gravest importance, then, indeed, must the efforts of our Association be re-doubled, and the attitude of all citizens toward them must be that of appreciation of their needs, and an understanding of the impotence of our country in time of peril if they shall be impoverished in resources and inadequate in equipment. Railroads in the hands of Receivers are prepared only to succumb to the Sheriff's hammer. Railroads without a surplus are a menace to the prosperity and safety of all whom they should serve in peace or in case of invasion. For the railroads we ask nothing they do not deserve, nothing that shall do hurt to anyone, but we do ask for them everything that will make them strong—strong in peace, strong for national defence, and strong in the confidence of the public, which confidence they are striving mightily to win.

You, sir, our welcome and illustrious guest, whom we delight to honor to-night, in your memorable letter to that distinguished railway executive, Mr. Frank Trumbull, who, happily, and to our pleasure, is at our board upon this occasion, said:

“The laws must speak plainly and effectively against whatever is wrong, or against the public interest, and these laws must be observed; for the rest, and within the sphere of legitimate enterprise, we must all stand as one to see justice done and all fair assistance rendered, and rendered ungrudgingly.”

To that sentiment, in behalf of all whose interests abide in the realm of transportation, I utter an unctuous “Amen!”

In your recent address to the Congress you said:

“The transportation problem is an exceedingly serious and pressing one in this country. There has from time to time of late been reason to fear that our railroads would not much longer be able to cope with it successfully, as at present equipped and co-ordinated.

* * * It seems to me that it might be the part of wisdom, therefore, before further legislation in this field is attempted, to look at the whole problem of co-ordination and efficiency in the full light of a fresh assessment of circumstance and opinion, as a guide to dealing with the several parts of it.”

A hope was thereby aroused in the breasts of those burdened with the responsibilities of railway management, and those to whom a wise solution of our railway problems means the difference between solvency and bankruptcy, that from your recommendation there may come such a broad, deep, sincere governmental study of the reciprocal relations of the carrier and the carried, as shall result in legislation that shall bring peace and prosperity to a realm too long disturbed by animosities and reprisals, the outgrowth of conditions and practices to be forever ended. Shall there be need of organization of our transportation systems, so that they may become a unified force for national protection, happy will be our people as they shall witness the masterful mental fertility, the indomitable energy, the eager willingness and devoted loyalty to our country of the railway officials of the United States.

Speaking of preparedness, this

audience, so large in number and, in character so splendidly representative of our nation's business, is now unanimously and thoroughly prepared, and has been all the time I have been talking—and impatient to do it—to show our Nation's Chief how deep is our appreciation of the highly prized honor he has done us by his acceptance of our invitation to speak to us to-night. While others may gaily and with care-free abandon tell in boisterous speech what they would do if they were he, upon his shoulders rest the crushing burdens of State, placed there by the Electorate. Resolute he stands for the honor of America, calm in mien, high in purpose, a patriot in every heartbeat, his words the mightiest in import that are uttered in our land.

Rise, fellow Americans, you are now free to give enthusiastic expression to your sentiments of respect, admiration, gratitude and welcome to

OUR PRESIDENT!

Address by the Hon. Woodrow Wilson

President of the United States

MR. TOASTMASTER, and Ladies and Gentlemen:

The exactions of my official duties have recently been so great that it has been very seldom indeed that I could give myself so great a pleasure as that which I am enjoying tonight. It is a great pleasure to come and be greeted in such generous fashion by men so thoughtful as yourselves and so deeply engaged in some of the most important undertakings of the nation; and I consider it a privilege to be permitted to lay before you some of the things to which we ought to give our most careful and deliberate consideration.

America's New Position

The question, it seems to me, which most demands clarification just now is the question to which your toastmaster has referred,—the question of preparation for national defense. I say that it stands in need of clarification because, singularly enough, it has been deeply clouded by passion and prejudice. It is very singular that a question, the elements of which are so simple and so obvious, should have been so clouded by the discussion of men of high motive, men of purpose as handsome as any of us may claim, and yet apparently incapable of divesting themselves of that sort of provincialism which consists in thinking the contents of their own mind to be the contents of the mind of the world. For gentlemen, while America is a very great nation, while America contains all the elements of fine force and

accomplishment, America does not constitute the major part of the world. We live in a world which we did not make, which we cannot alter, which we cannot think into a different condition from that which actually exists. It would be a hopeless piece of provincialism to suppose that because we think differently from the rest of the world, we are at liberty to assume that the rest of the world will permit us to enjoy that thought without disturbance.

How Differ on National Safety?

It is a surprising circumstance also that men should allow partisan feeling or personal ambition to creep into the discussion of this fundamental thing. How can Americans differ about the safety of America?

And I, for my part, am ambitious that America should do a greater and more difficult thing than the great nations on the other side of the water have done. In all the belligerent countries, men without distinction of party have drawn together to accomplish a successful prosecution of the war. Is it not a more difficult and a more desirable thing that all Americans should put partisan prepossession aside and draw together for the successful prosecution of peace? I covet that distinction for America, and I believe that America is going to enjoy that distinction.

Forgetting Party Lines

Only the other day the leader of the Republican minority in the House of

Representatives delivered a speech that showed that he was ready, and I take it for granted that the men behind him were ready, to forget party lines in order that all men may act with a common mind and impulse for the service of the country. And I want, upon this first public occasion, to pay my tribute of respect and obligation to him.

I find it very hard indeed to approach this subject without very deep emotion, gentlemen, because when we speak of America and the things that are to be conserved in her, does it not call a wonderful picture into your mind? America is young still, she is not yet even in the heyday of her development and power. Think of the great treasures of youth and energy and ideal purpose still to be drawn from the deep sources from which this nation has always drawn its light.

America Free to Help

Think of the service which those forces can and must render to the rest of the world. Think of the position into which America has been drawn, almost in spite of herself, by the circumstances of the present day. She alone is free to help find things wherever they show themselves in the world. And she is forced, also, whether she will or no, in the decades immediately ahead of us, to furnish the world with its chief economic guidance and assistance.

It is very fine to remember what ideals will be back of that assistance. Economic assistance in itself is not necessarily handsome. It is a legitimate thing to make money; but it is not an ideal thing to make money. Money brings with it power, which may be well or ill employed. And it should be the pride of America always to employ her money to the highest purpose. Yet, if we are drawn into the maelstrom that now surges across the water and swirls even in the Eastern regions of the world, we shall not be permitted to keep a free hand to do

the high things that we intend to do. And it is necessary that we should examine ourselves and so order that we can make certain that the tasks imposed upon us will be performed, and well performed.

Provincial No Longer

America has been reluctant to match her wits with the rest of the world. When I face a body of men like this it is almost incredible to remember that only yesterday they were afraid to put their wits into free competition with the world. The best brains in the world afraid to match brains with the rest of the world! We have preferred to be provincial. We have preferred to stand behind protecting devices. And now, we are thrust out to do, on a scale never dreamed of in recent generations in America, the business of the world. We can not longer be a provincial nation.

Let no man dare to say, if he would speak the truth, that the question of preparation for national defense is a question of war or of peace. If there is one passion more deep seated in the hearts of our fellow countrymen than another, it is the passion for peace. No nation in the world ever more instinctively turned away from the thought of war than this nation to which we belong. Partly because, in the plenitude of its power, in the unrestricted area of its opportunities, it has found nothing to covet in the possessions and power of other nations.

Maintaining Peace

There is no spirit of aggrandizement in America. There is no desire on the part of any thoughtful and conscientious American man to take one foot of territory from any nation in the world. I myself share to the bottom of my heart that profound love for peace. I have sought to maintain peace against very great, and sometimes very unfair odds, and I am ready, at any time, to use every power that is in me to prevent such a cata-

trophe as war coming upon this country. So that it is not permissible for any man to say with anxiety that the defense of the nation has the least tinge in it of desire for power which can be used to bring on war.

But, gentlemen, there is something that the American people love better than they love peace. They love the principles upon which their political life is founded. They are ready at any time to fight for the vindication of their character and of their honor. They will at no time seek a contest, but they will at no time cravenly avoid it. Because if there is one thing that the country ought to fight for and that every nation ought to fight for, it is the integrity of its own convictions. We cannot surrender our convictions. I would rather surrender territory than surrender those ideals which are the staff of life for the soul itself.

Holding Ideals for Others

And because we hold certain ideals, we have thought it was right we should hold them for others as well as for ourselves. America has more than once given evidence of the generosity and disinterestedness of its love of liberty. It has been willing to fight for the liberty of others as well as for its own liberty. The world sneered when we set out for the liberation of Cuba, but the world does not sneer any longer. The world now knows what it was then loath to believe, that a nation can sacrifice its own interests and its own blood for the sake of the liberty and happiness of another people. And whether by one process or another we have made ourselves in some sort the champions of free government and national sovereignty in both continents of this hemisphere.

So that there are certain obligations, which every American knows, that we have undertaken. The first and primary obligation is the maintenance of the integrity of our own sovereignty —which goes as of course. There is

also the maintenance of our liberty to develop our political institutions without hindrance, and last of all, there is the determination and the obligation to stand as the strong brother of all those in this hemisphere who will maintain the same principles and follow the same ideals of liberty.

Mexico and World Politics

May I venture to insert here a parenthesis? Have any of you thought of this? We have slowly, very slowly indeed, begun to win the confidence of the other states of the American hemisphere. If we should go into Mexico, do you know what would happen? All the sympathies of the rest of America would look across the water, and not northward to the great republic which we profess to represent. And do you not see the consequences that would ensue in every international relationship? Have the gentlemen who have rushed down to Washington to insist that we should go into Mexico reflected upon the politics of the world?

Time and Opinion

Nobody seriously supposes, gentlemen, that the United States needs to fear an invasion of its own territory. What America has to fear, if she has anything to fear, are indirect, round-about, flank movements, upon her regnant position in the Western Hemisphere. Are we going to open those gates, or are we going to close them? For they are the gates to the hearts of our American friends to the south of us, and not gates to the ports. Win their spirits and you have won the only sort of leadership and the only sort of safety that America covets. We must all of us think, from this time out, gentlemen, in terms of the world, and must learn what it is that America has set out to maintain as a standard bearer for all those who love liberty and justice and the righteousness of political action.

But, gentlemen, we must find means to do this thing which are suitable to

the time and suitable to our own ideals. Suitable to the time: Does anybody understand the time? Perhaps when you learned, as I dare say you did learn beforehand, that I was expecting to address you on the subject of preparedness, you recalled the address which I made to Congress something more than a year ago, in which I said that this question of military preparedness was not a pressing question. But more than a year has gone by since then, and I would be ashamed if I had not learned something in fourteen months. The minute I stop changing my mind as President with the change of all the circumstances in the world, I will be a back number.

Tariff Board

There is another thing about which I have changed my mind. A year ago I was not in favor of a tariff board. And I will tell you why; because then the only purpose of a tariff board was to keep alive an unprofitable controversy. If you set up any board of inquiry whose purpose it is to keep business disturbed and to make it always an open question what you are going to do about the public policy of the Government, I am opposed to it. And the very men who were dinging it into our ears that what business wanted was to be let alone, were many of them men who were insisting that we should start up a controversy that meant that we could not let it alone. There is a great deal more opinion vocal in this world than is consistent with logic.

But the circumstances of the present time are these: There is going on in the world, under our eyes, an economic revolution. No man understands that revolution, no man has the elements of it clearly in his mind, no part of the business of legislation with regard to international trade can be undertaken until we do understand it. And members of Congress are too busy, their duties are too multifarious

and distracting, to make it possible within a sufficiently short space of time for them to master the change that is coming.

Respect for Facts

I hear a great many things predicted about the end of the war, but I don't know anything about what is going to happen when the war is over, and neither do you. There are two diametrically opposed views as to immigration. Some men tell us that at least a million men are going to leave the country, and others tell us that many millions are going to rush into it. Neither party knows what they are talking about; and I am one of those prudent individuals who would really like to know the facts before he forms an opinion; not out of wisdom, but out of prudence. I have lived long enough to know that if I do not, the facts will get away with me. I have come to have a wholesome respect for the facts. I have had to yield to them sometimes before I saw them coming, and that has led me to keep a weather eye open in order that I may see them coming.

There is so much to understand that we have not the data to comprehend, that I for one would not dare, so far as my advice is concerned, to leave the government without the adequate means of inquiry.

Future Uncertain

But that is another parenthesis. What I am trying to impress upon you now is that the circumstances of the world to-day are not what they were yesterday, or what they were in any of our yesterdays; and that it is not certain what they will be to-morrow. I can not tell you what the international relations of this country will be to-morrow, and I use the word literally. And I would not dare keep silent and let the country suppose that to-morrow was certain to be as bright as today.

America will never be the aggres-

sor; America will always seek to the last point, at which her honor is involved, to avoid the things which disturb the peace of the world. But America does not control the circumstances of the world, and we must be sure that we are faithful servants of those things which we love, and are ready to defend them against every contingency that may affect or impair them.

No Militarism

But, as I was saying a moment ago, we must seek the means which are consistent with the principles of our lives. It goes without saying, though apparently it is necessary to say it to some excited persons, that one thing this country never will endure is a system that can be called militarism. But militarism consists in preparing a great machine whose only use is for war, and giving it no use to which to apply itself. Men who are in charge of edged tools and bidden prepare them for exact and scientific use, grow very impatient if they are not permitted to use them, and I do not believe that the creation of such an instrument is an insurance of peace. I believe that it involves the danger of all the temptations that skillful persons have, to use the things that they know how to use. But we don't have to do that. America is always going to use her army in two ways. She is going to use it for the purposes of peace, and she is going to use it as a nucleus for expansion in those things which she does believe in, namely, the preparation of her citizens to take care of themselves.

Industrial Preparation

There are two sides to the question of preparation. There is not merely the military side, there is the industrial side. And the ideal which I have in mind is this, gentlemen: We ought to have in this country a great system of industrial and vocational education, under federal guidance, and with fed-

eral aid, in which a very large percentage of the youth of this country will be given training in the skillful use and application of the principles of science in manoeuvre and business. And it will be perfectly feasible and highly desirable to add to that and combine with it such a training in the mechanism and use and care of arms, in the sanitation of camp; in the simpler forms of manoeuvre and organization, as will make these same men industrially efficient and individually serviceable for national defense.

The point about such a system will be that its emphasis will lie on the industrial and civil side of life; and that, like all the rest of America the use of force will only be in the background and as the last resort. So that men will think first of their families and their daily work, of their service in the economic fields of the country, and only last of all of their serviceability to the nation as soldiers and men at arms. That is the ideal of America. But you cannot create such a system over night. You cannot create such a system rapidly. It has got to be built up; and I hope it will be built up by slow and effective stages. And there is something to be done in the meantime. We must see to it that a sufficient body of citizens is given the kind of training which will make them efficient for call into the field in case of necessity.

Waste of Force

It is discreditable to this country, for this is a country full of intelligent men, that we should have exhibited to the world the example we have sometimes exhibited to it of stupidity and brutal waste of force. Think of asking men who can be easily drawn to come into the field, crude, ignorant, inexperienced, and merely furnish the stuff for camp fever and the bullets of the enemy.

The sanitary experience of our army in the Spanish War was merely an indictment of America's indifference

to the manifest lessons of experience in the matter of ordinary preparation. We have got the men to waste, but God forbid that we should waste them. Men who go as efficient instruments of national honor into the field afford a very handsome spectacle indeed, but men who go in crude and ignorant boys, only indict those in authority for stupidity and neglect. And so it seems to me that it is our manifest duty to have a proper citizen reserve.

National Guard

I am not forgetting our National Guard. I had the privilege of being Governor of one of our great States — a State which furnishes this city with a great deal of its intelligence. Some Jerseymen on either side here enjoy that very much.

As Governor of New Jersey I was brought into association with what I am glad to believe was one of the most efficient portions of the National Guard of the United States. I learned to admire the men, to respect the officers, and to believe in the National Guard. And I believe that it is the duty of Congress to do very much more for the National Guard than it has ever done heretofore. I believe that that great arm of our national defense should be built up and encouraged to the utmost. But, you know that under the Constitution of the United States it is under the direction of more than two score States, and that it is not permitted to the National Government directly to direct its development and organization. And that only upon occasion of actual invasion has the President of the United States the right to ask those men to leave their respective States. I, for my part, am afraid, though some gentlemen differ with me, that there is no way in which that force can be made a direct resource as a national reserve under national authority.

A National Reserve

What we need is a body of men trained in association with units of the

army. A body of men organized under the immediate direction of the national authorities. A body of men subject to the immediate call to arms of the national authority, and yet men not put into the ranks of the regular army; men left to their tasks of civil life; men supplied with equipment and training, but not drawn from the peaceful pursuits which have made America great and must keep her great.

I am not a partisan of any one plan. I have had too much experience to think that it is right to say that the plan which I proposed is the only plan that will work, because I have a shrewd suspicion that there may be other plans which will work. But what I am for, and what every American ought to insist upon, is a body of at least half a million trained citizens who will serve under conditions of danger as an immediately available national reserve.

The Navy

I am not saying anything about the Navy, because I don't want to go to sea. I want to stick to the one theme to-night, because for some reason there is not the same controversy about the Navy that there is about the Army. The Navy is obvious and easily understood. The Army apparently is very difficult to comprehend and understand. We have a traditional prejudice against armies which makes us stop thinking the minute we begin talking about them. We suppose that all armies are alike, and that there can not be an American system in this instance, but that it must be the European system, and that is what I for one am trying to divest my own mind of. The Navy is so obvious an instrument of national defense, that I believe that with the differences of opinion about the detail, it is not going to be difficult to carry out a proper and reasonable program for the increase of the Navy. But that is another story; and you know I have to give a

good many speeches in the near future, and I must save something to subsequent days. My theme to-night is National Defense on Land, where we seem most ignorant of it and most negligent about it.

Political Accounting

I do not want to leave upon your minds the impression that I have any anxiety as to the outcome, for I have not the slightest. There is only one way that parties and individuals win the confidence of this nation and that is to do the things that ought to be done. Nobody is going to be deceived. Speeches are not going to win elections. The facts are going to speak for themselves, and speak louder than anybody who controverts them. No political party, no group of men can ever disappoint America. This is a year of political accounting, and Americans in politics are rather expert accountants. They know what the books contain and they are not going to be deceived by it. No man is going to hide behind any excuses. The goods must be delivered or the confidence will not be enjoyed; and for my part I hope every man in public life will get what is coming to him.

For National Accord

But if this is true, gentlemen, it is because of the things that lie much deeper than laughter, much deeper than cheers; that lie down at the very roots of our life. America refuses to be deceived about the things which most concern her, national honor, national safety. All have confidence in everything that she represents. It is a solemn time when men must examine not only their purposes, but their hearts, when men must purge themselves of individual ambition, when men must see to it that they are ready for the utmost self-sacrifice in the interest of the common welfare.

Let no man dare be a marplot. Let no man bring partisan passion into these great things. Let men honestly debate the facts, and courageously act upon them, and then there will come that day when the world will say, "This America that we thought was full of a multitude of contrary ideas, now speaks with the great volume of the heart's accord, and that great heart of America has behind it the moral force of righteousness and the hope and the liberty of mankind."

R E Q U E S T S F O R C O P I E S

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